

## Matthew Humberstone Foundation Hospital

The Matthew Humberstone Foundation is actually a group of seven private hospitals, all of which are located in London (there was originally only one – hence the singular title). Though not exclusively, each one functions as a centre for excellence in a specialist area of medicine – cancer, cardiology, neurology, paediatrics, IVF, obstetrics and spinal injuries. All seven also facilitate intensive critical care, undertake complex surgical procedures and provide long-term care for the infirm and have resident doctors and nurses supported by constant on-call consultants, specialists, anaesthetists and medical support teams such as radiologists and physiotherapists. Each centre provides patients with access to the very latest diagnostics, treatments and surgical techniques in its speciality.

Whilst the Foundation is proud of its work with the National Health Service and its collaborative work with teaching hospitals and university research units, the majority of its income is from private patients and donations, these most commonly being bequests in wills of grateful patients or their families. Of the private patients around 75% come from overseas, predominantly those countries in Southern Asia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Although the Foundation has no treatment centres outside of the UK, they do have representatives in all of the major centres of population in these regions.

This representation ranges from what might be described as 'sales' centres offering a point of contact (rather than medical advice) through to units within other hospitals where diagnoses can be made. Marketing – in the UK and overseas – is limited, with ads in relevant 'up-market' magazines being the only above-the-line promotion. The majority of patients (customers) come from referrals by medical professionals in the various regions. As these doctors and surgeons are paid a commission for each patient they refer to the Foundation, they are vetted carefully by the Foundation before being accepted as a referring agent. Whilst this method of marketing has been very successful, it has given the Foundation an 'elitist' reputation – something that not only goes against the ethos of its founder, the venerable Mr C Shaw, but also limits the scope for expanding its customer base to take up the spare capacity in its hospitals.

The Internet has been identified as the best route to market by the Foundation's director of marketing, Johnny Roe, and so an extensive redevelopment of the Foundation's web presence is planned, as is the use of online advertising. It is envisaged that this will compliment the efforts of the Foundation's (already) very effective PR department.

